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ICOMING TELEGRAM *Department of State*

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CORRECTION ISSUED
8:35 PM 7/14/67 EAL

EXCISE

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SAIGON 1082, 7-14-67

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S E C R E T SAIGON 1082

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EXDIS

1. I SAW KY THE MORNING OF JULY 13. OUR DISCUSSION WAS RELATIVELY BRIEF DUE TO THE ARRIVAL OF TRAN VAN HUONG FOR COURTESY CALL ON PRIMIN.

2. I INFORMED KY THAT I HAD HEARD REPORTS FROM SEVERAL SOURCES THAT SINCE HE HAD AGREED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE AND TO RUN WITH THIEU THAT HE WAS UNDECIDED AS TO WHAT COURSE TO FOLLOW IN THE CAMPAIGN - I.E. TO PLAY A PASSIVE ROLE OR TO WORK AS ACTIVELY FOR THE JOINT TICKET AS HE HAD DONE FOR HIS OWN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY. I TOLD HIM I THOUGHT IT HIGHLY IMPORTANT THAT HE SHOULD TAKE AN ACTIVE PART

PAGE2 RUMJIR 1082 S E C R E T
IN THE CAMPAIGN, THAT HE HAS MUCH TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE TICKET AND TO HIS COUNTRY. I MENTIONED THAT THE MEASURES FOR REFORM WHICH HE HAD DESCRIBED TO SECRETARY MCNAMARA AND TO ME WERE IMPRESSIVE. IT WAS IN HIS OWN INTEREST AND THAT OF THE COUNTRY TO WORK FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO BRING SOME OF HIS IDEAS FOR REFORM TO FRUITION.

3. I TOLD KY AGAIN THAT I CONSIDERED HIS DECISION TO STEP DOWN FROM HIS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY WAS COMMENDABLE AND CLEARLY TAKEN IN THE INTEREST OF THE COUNTRY AND OF THE ARMED FORCES. I FELT THAT HIS ACTION HAS INCREASED HIS PRESTIGE AND THE MEASURE OF HIS CHARACTER. I SUGGESTED TO HIM A PARALLEL IN PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENCY IN 1960.

4. KY SAID THAT AS A MATTER OF FACT HIS TROUBLES JUST BEGAN ON JUNE 30, THAT THE TEN OR TWELVE DAYS SINCE THEN HAD BEEN BAD. PEOPLE HAVE BEEN COMING TO HIM CONSTANTLY, ASKING WHY HE STEPPED DOWN, WHY HE ALLOWED HIMSLF TO BE OUT-MANEUVERED BY THIEU. HE HAS REPLIED TO THEM THAT HE TOOK

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 10/7/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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INCOMING TELEGRAM *Department of State*

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THE DECISION CONSCIOUSLY. HE HADN'T ALLOWED HIMSLF TO BE OUT MANEUVERED. HE FELT THE DICISION WAS NECESSARY IN THE INTEREST OF THE ARMED FORCES AND OF THE COUNTRY. THE BUDDHISTS HAVE COME TO SEE HIM, THE CAO DAI, THE HOA HAO AND OTHERS. ALL ARE SEEKING HIS ADVICE AS TO WHAT THEY SHOULD DO. IT HAS BROUGHT HOME TO HIM SHARPLY THE DANGERS AND THE DIVISIONS WHICH THREATEN THE COUNTRY IN THIS PERIOD AND HE FEELS THAT HE IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN KEEP THESE UNDER CONTROL.

5. I TOLD HIM THAT IF THIS IS TRUE, THEN HE HAS AN EVEN GREATER RESPONSIBLITY TO TAKE AN ACTIVE PART IN THE CAMPAIGN. PURSUING THIS FURTHER, I ASKED HIM DIRECTLY WHETHER HE HAD A DEFINITE UNDERSTANDING WITH THIEU. HE REPLIED SIMPLY "YES, I HAVE", ADDING, HOWEVER, THAT IT REMAINED TO BE SEEN WHETHER THIEU STICKS TO HIS WORD. IN THIS REGARD, HE SAID, THE ARMED FORCES LEADERSHIP HAS DECIDED THAT THEY SHOULD HOLD MORE FREQUENT MEETINGS, AT WHICH , OF COURSE, THIEU AND KY WOULD BE PRESENT, IN AN EFFORT TO TRY TO REESTABLISH THE CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP WHICH FORMERLY EXISTED AMONG THE TOP GENERALS.

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6. KY REITERATED THAT THE WHOLE SITUATION HAS KEPT HIM UNDER A HEAVY STRAIN AND THAT HE REALLY OUGHT TO GET AWAY FOR A FEW DAYS. I URGED HIM TO DO SO.

7. WE DISCUSSED CAMPAIGN ISSUES BRIEFLY, KY SAID THAT HE FELT TWO PRIMARY ISSUES ARE CORRUPTION AND HOW TO END THE WAR.

ON THE LATTER HE AGAIN STATED, AS HE HAD TO SECRETARY MCNAMARA, THAT THE GVN IS ALWAYS READY TO TALK TO HANOI. IN THIS CONNECTION I CALLED HIS ATTENTION TO REPORTS THAT A NUMBER OF NORTH VIETNAMESE AMBASSADORS HAD BEEN RECALLED TO HANOI. I SAID IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THIS WAS ROUTINE OR NOT BUT SUGGESTED THAT HE MIGHT IN VIEW OF THIS MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT RENEWING THIS EXPRESSION OF WILLINGNESS TO TALK TO HANOI.

8. ON THE QUESTION OF NEGOTIATIONS, KY STRESSED THAT THEY NEED CAREFUL PREPARATION AND ARE NOT SOMETHING TO RUSH INTO. WITH AN ELECTED AND STABLE GOVERNMENT THE GVN CAN BEGIN TO APPROACH THE PROBLEM, BUT WITH CAREFUL STEP BY STEP PREPARATION OF ANY MOVES TO BE MADE. THE DANGER

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WITH THE LINE BEING TAKEN BY AU TRUONG THANH AND OTHERS

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OF HIS ILK IS THAT THEY ARE NOT THINKING THROUGH THE PROBLEM. I HAD THE FEELING THAT WHILE KY FEELS STRONGLY ON THE PEACE ISSUE THAT HE IS NOT LIKELY TO PRESS IT IN THE CAMPAIGN UNLESS HE IS PUSHED INTO IT BY HIS OPPONENTS.

9. I TOOK OCCASION TO REFER TO THE QUESTION OF BIG MINH AND COMMENTED THAT I THOUGHT THEIR POSITION WOULD BE MUCH STRONGER IF THE DECISION TO REJECT HIS CANDIDACY AND KEEP HIM OUT OF THE COUNTRY SHOULD BE FAIRLY BASED ON LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS, SINCE I UNDERSTOOD THE OBJECTIO\. FILED BY GENERAL VIEN AND THE CORPS COMMANDERS REFERRED ONLY TO THE THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY. I ADDED THAT I, OF COURSE, RECOGNIZED THAT THIS WAS THEIR BUSINESS AND WAS SURE THEY WERE CONSCIOUS TO THE SENSITIVITY OF HOW THE MATTER IS HANDLED. KY AGREED WITH MY VIEWS BUT MADE NO OTHER COMMENT.

10. I ALSO RAISED AGAIN THE DESIRABILITY OF INVITING INTER-NATIONAL OBSERVERS TO COME TO VIET-[illegible] DURING THE CAMPAIGN

AND TO VIEW THE ELECTIONS. I REPEATED POINTS I HAD MADE WITH HIM PREVIOUSLY STRESSING THAT THE SPOTLIGHT IN WHICH SOUTH VIET-NAM FINDS ITSELF DEMANDS A LEVEL OF PERFECTION IN THE CONDUCT OF THE ELECTIONS WELL ABOVE THE ROLE OBSER ERS COULD PLAY IN OFFSETTING HARSH OR BIASED PRESS CRITICISM. HE AGREED WITH ALL I HAD TO SAY BUT MADE NO COMMITMENT. (DO HAS TOLD CALHOUN THAT A FORMAL INVITATION WILL BE SENT TO U THANT AND FONOFF IS CONSIDERING OTHER POSSIBILITIES.)

11. OUR DISCUSSION WAS CUT OFF BY THE ARRIVAL OF TRAN VAN HUONG FOR HIS APPOINTMENT. I INTEND, THEREFORE, TO SEE KY AGAIN IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS TO PURSUE IT, PARTICULARLY AS I WISH TO GO INTO GREATER DETAIL AS TO HIS REACTION TO THE PROGRESS OF THE ELECTIONS AND HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CAMPAIGN. I ALSO INTEND TO SEE THIEU FOR A SIMILAR DISCUSSION WITH HIM, AND I AM SEEING [illegible] THIS EVENING.

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(#) - Omission; correction to follow.

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